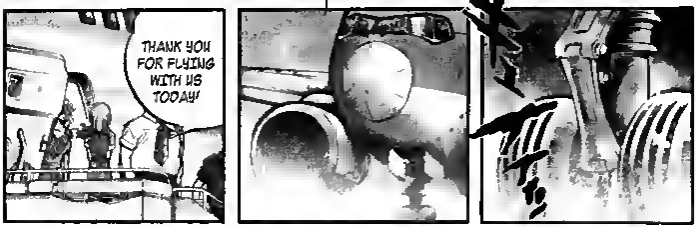
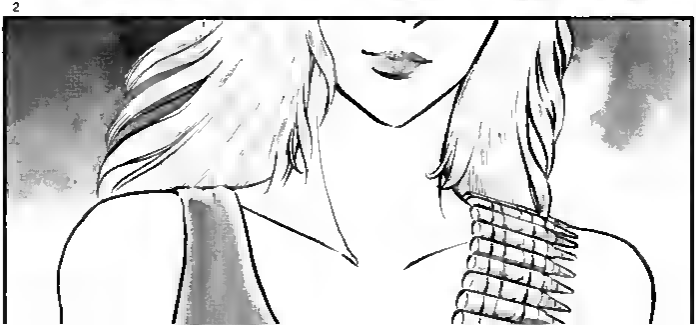
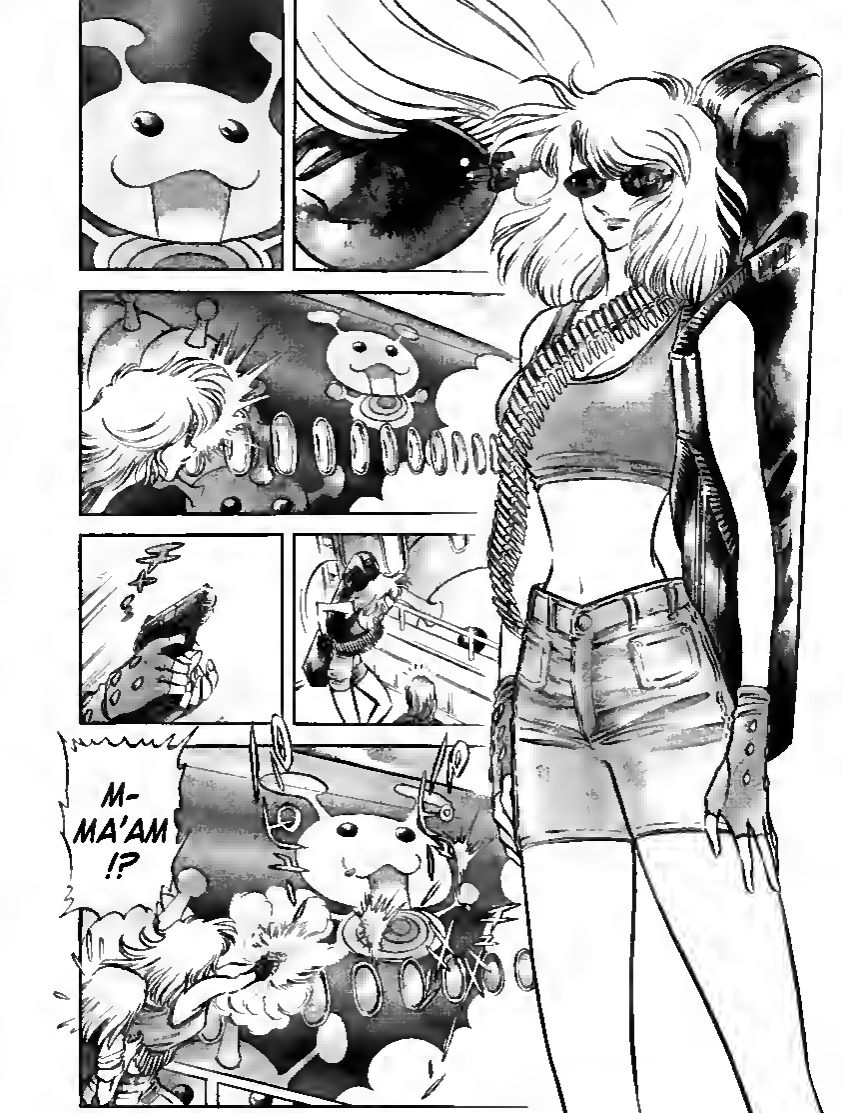
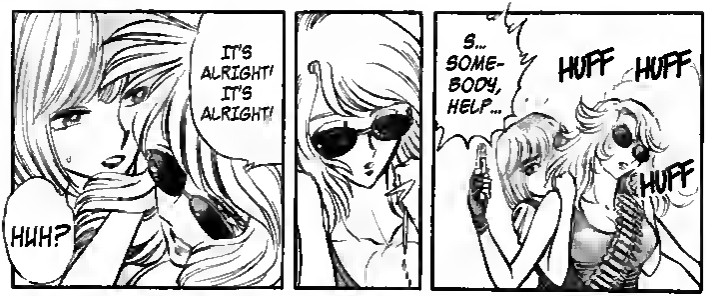
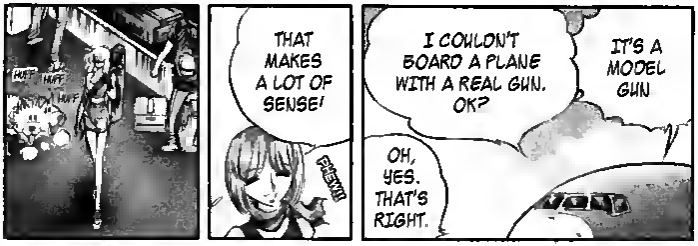
CHAPTER 2: THE BEAUTIFUL SNIPER VANISHED IN THE CITY

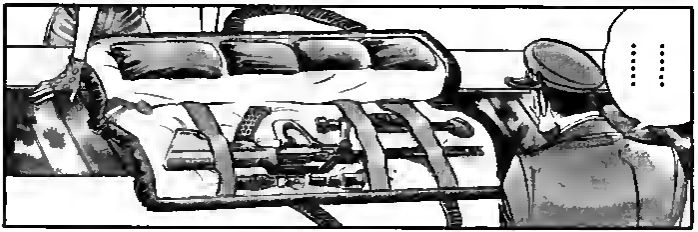

THANK YOU FOR FLYING WITH US TODAY!




M-
MA'AM
!?


IT'S ALRIGHT! IT'S ALRIGHT!
HUH?
S... SOME-BODY, HELP...
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF


HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
THAT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE!
SNIFF
I COULDN'T BOARD A PLANE WITH A REAL GUN. OK?
IT'S A MODEL GUN
OH, YES. THAT'S RIGHT.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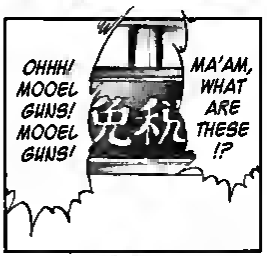
4

THIS IS COMMON PRACTICE IN AMERICA!!
NOT EVEN I COULD BRING REAL GUNS OVERSEAS.
GOT ANY DRUGS?
HUFF
HUFF


OHHH! MODEL GUNS! MODEL GUNS!
免税
MA'AM, WHAT ARE THESE !?

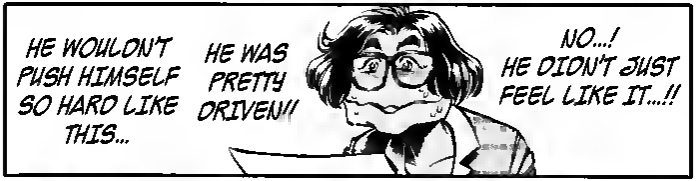
THANK YOU!
THEN YOU'RE GOOD TO GO!
I...I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT!
HEH...
WAAAAAAHHAHAHHAHHAHHAH!
HA HA HA HA!
THE CUSTOMS AT RURAL JAPANESE AIRPORTS... ARE TOO EASY!!

TOKYO
...
...I REALLY SHOULDN'T BE DELIVERING MY MANUSCRIPTS... AFTER AN ALL-NIGHTER...
OH, NO...
6
MR. HONDO !?
NO...
YOU'RE ALMOST AT THE PUBLISHER'S HANG IN THERE..!
HUFF HUFF
ALMOST THERE!!
SIGN NO UNAUTHORIZED ENTRY

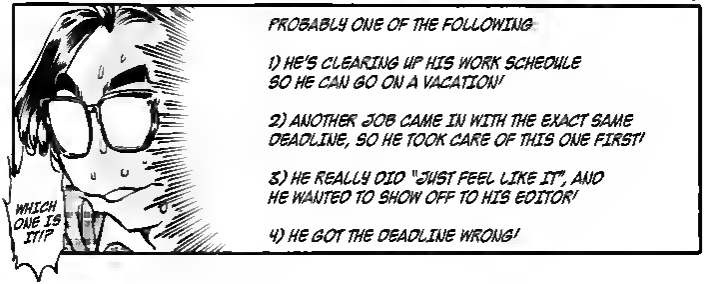
WERE YOU JUST IN THE AREA...?
SO WHAT DO YOU NEED...?
WE JUST HAD A MEETING THE OTHER DAY, REMEMBER?
N ..NO...
YOU COULD'VE JUST CALLED!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE ..!?
HEHE...
HAHA HA!
HAHA HAHA HAHA HA!!

FEAST YOUR EYES ON THIS!!
HUUU UUUU UUUH !?
N-NO WAY...
THE COMP-LETED MANU-SCRIPTS !?
WHOA! THEY'RE FULLY ILLUS-TRATED, TOO!
B...BUT WHY!? YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER WEEK BEFORE THE DEAD-LINE!!

I JUST FELT LIKE IT...!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
NO REASON...

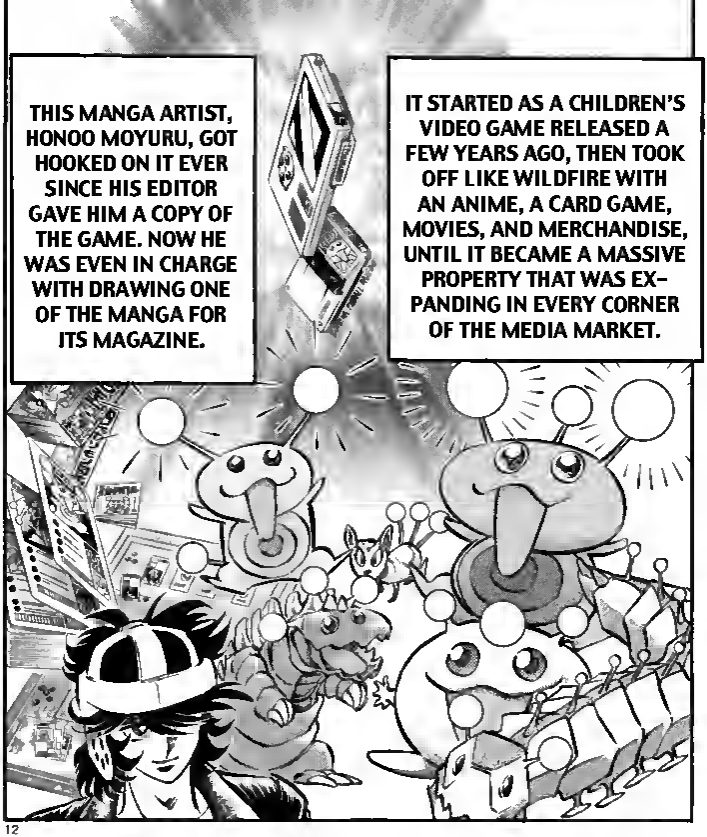

HE WOULDN'T PUSH HIMSELF SO HARD LIKE THIS...
HE WAS PRETTY DRIVEN!!
NO...! HE DIDN'T JUST FEEL LIKE IT...!!

AND IT'S..
UNLESS HE HAD A "SECRET MOTIVE"...!

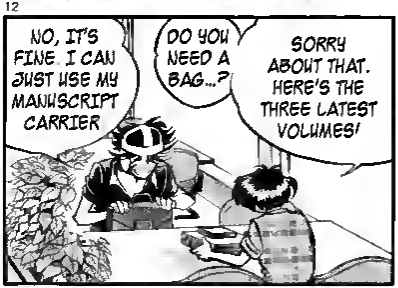

WHICH ONE IS IT!?
PROBABLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING
1) HE'S CLEARING UP HIS WORK SCHEDULE SO HE CAN GO ON A VACATION!
2) ANOTHER JOB CAME IN WITH THE EXACT SAME DEADLINE, SO HE TOOK CARE OF THIS ONE FIRST!
3) HE REALLY DID "JUST FEEL LIKE IT", AND HE WANTED TO SHOW OFF TO HIS EDITOR!
4) HE GOT THE DEADLINE WRONG!

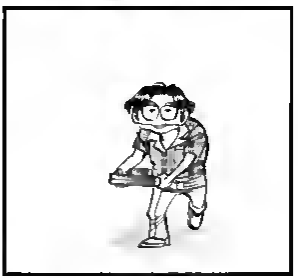
NUMBER TWO!!
I CAN'T UNDER-ESTIMATE MANGA ARTISTS IN THESE CIRCUM-STANCES!!
NO, NO, NO!
NO.. I COULD JUST TELL...
OR WAS I THINK-ING OUT LOUD!?
...DID YOU JUST READ MY MIND?
HUH !?
HEH..
10
YES. SO I WANTED TO GET THIS CHAPTER OUT OF THE WAY AS SOON AS I COULD
SO YOU GOT ANOTHER JOB?
BUT HIS "SENSES" HAVE BECOME TWICE AS SHARP..!!
AFTER PULLING AN ALL-NIGHTER, HE LOOKS SLEEPY.. AND SLUGGISH

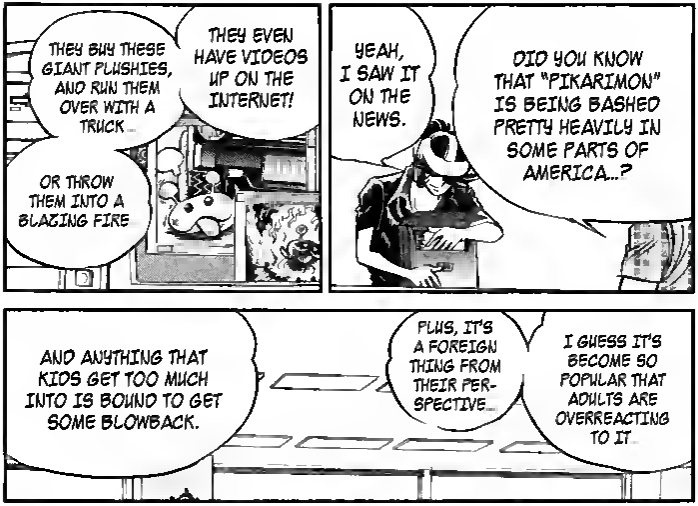
……
WELL...
WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME HERE IN PERSON?
I MEAN, WHY NOT?
WELL, I'M VERY HAPPY FOR THAT... BUT...
OH, ONE MORE THING!
THAT'S PROBABLY THE ONLY REASON...
I THINK I KNOW. SINCE HE FINISHED EARLY, HE WANTED TO USE THIS CHANCE TO SAY "FEAST YOUR EYES ON THIS" LIKE HE DID A SECOND AGO...!!
THERE ARE THREE NEW ONES OUT. I'LL GO GET THEM RIGHT AWAY!
OH, YES, THAT'S RIGHT!
WHILE I'M HERE, DO YOU MIND IF I PICK UP SOME MORE "PIKARIMON" REFERENCES?
WHAT IS "PIKARIMON" ...?


THIS MANGA ARTIST, HONOO MOYURU, GOT HOOKED ON IT EVER SINCE HIS EDITOR GAVE HIM A COPY OF THE GAME. NOW HE WAS EVEN IN CHARGE WITH DRAWING ONE OF THE MANGA FOR ITS MAGAZINE.
IT STARTED AS A CHILDREN'S VIDEO GAME RELEASED A FEW YEARS AGO, THEN TOOK OFF LIKE WILDFIRE WITH AN ANIME, A CARD GAME, MOVIES, AND MERCHANDISE, UNTIL IT BECAME A MASSIVE PROPERTY THAT WAS EXPANDING IN EVERY CORNER OF THE MEDIA MARKET.

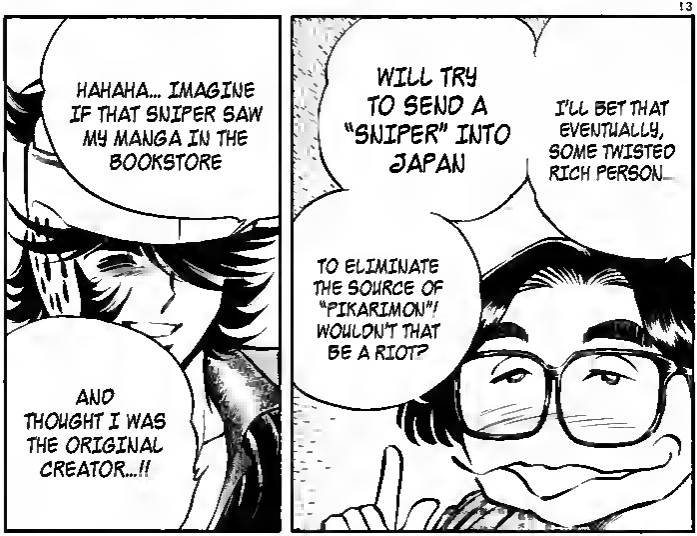
12

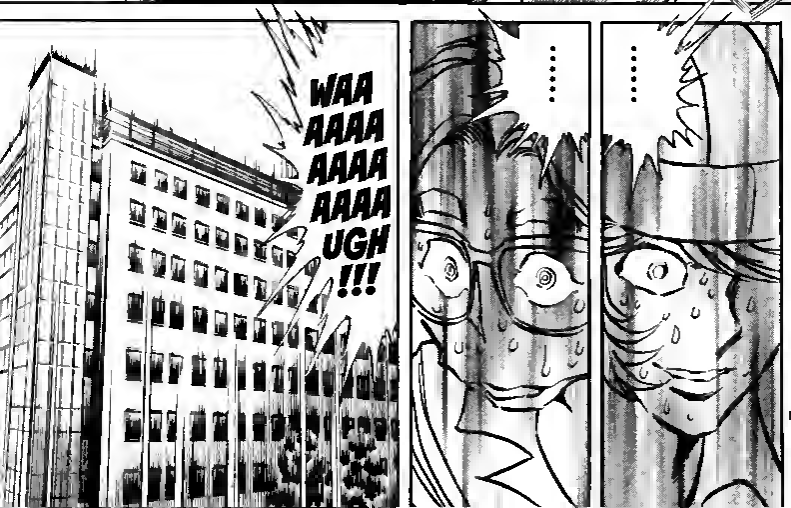

NO, IT'S FINE. I CAN JUST USE MY MANUSCRIPT CARRIER
DO YOU NEED A BAG...?
SORRY ABOUT THAT. HERE'S THE THREE LATEST VOLUMES!




THEY BUY THESE GIANT PLUSHIES, AND RUN THEM OVER WITH A TRUCK...
THEY EVEN HAVE VIDEOS UP ON THE INTERNET!
OR THROW THEM INTO A BLAZING FIRE
YEAH, I SAW IT ON THE NEWS.
DID YOU KNOW THAT "PIKARIMON" IS BEING BASHED PRETTY HEAVILY IN SOME PARTS OF AMERICA...?
AND ANYTHING THAT KIDS GET TOO MUCH INTO IS BOUND TO GET SOME BLOWBACK.
PLUS, IT'S A FOREIGN THING FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE...
I GUESS IT'S BECOME SO POPULAR THAT ADULTS ARE OVERREACTING TO IT...

13


HAHAHA... IMAGINE IF THAT SNIPER SAW MY MANGA IN THE BOOKSTORE
AND THOUGHT I WAS THE ORIGINAL CREATOR...!!
WILL TRY TO SEND A "SNIPER" INTO JAPAN
I'LL BET THAT EVENTUALLY, SOME TWISTED RICH PERSON...
TO ELIMINATE THE SOURCE OF "PIKARIMON"! WOULDN'T THAT BE A RIOT?



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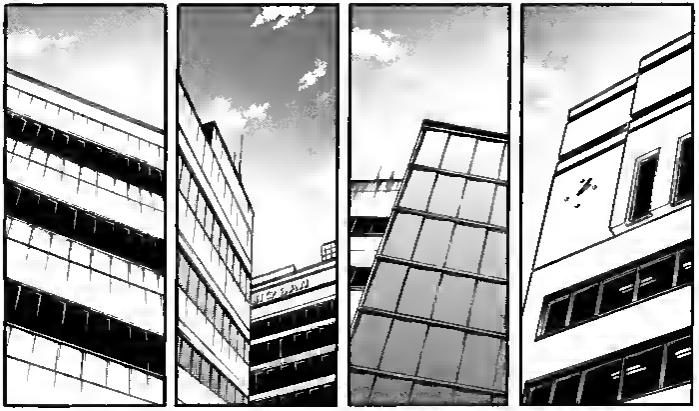
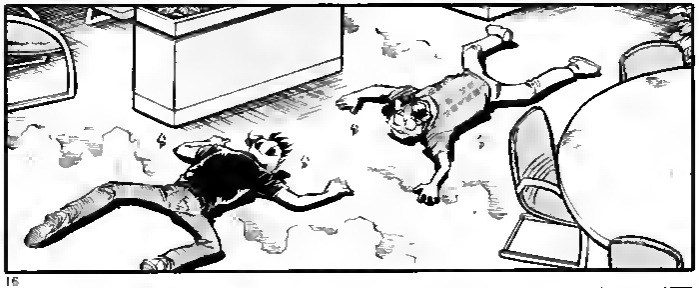
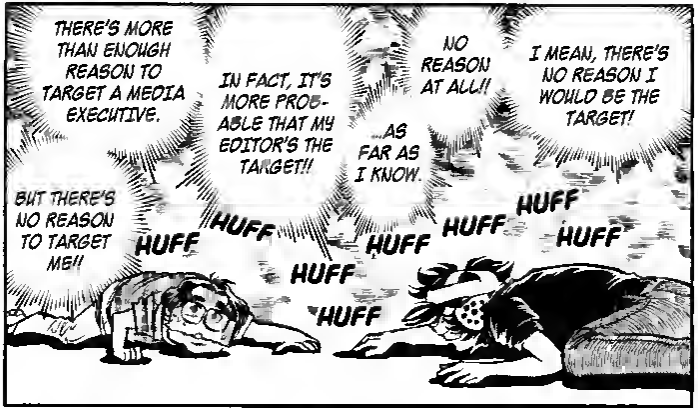
14

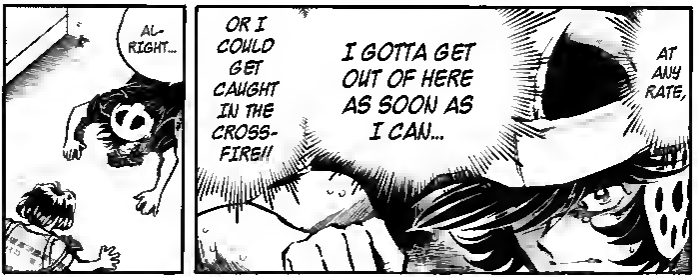


16

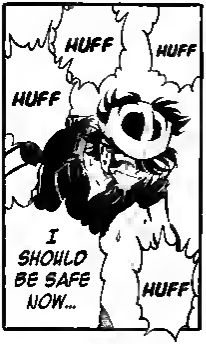


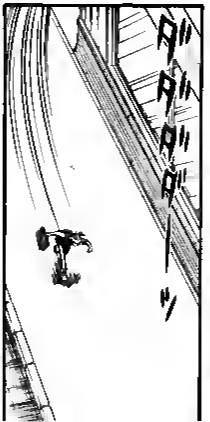
I'M SURE OF THAT!!
NO...! EVEN IF IT WAS A REAL BULLET, THERE'S NO WAY I WAS THE TARGET..
DON'T TELL ME...!!
W-WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT...?
A SNIPER!?

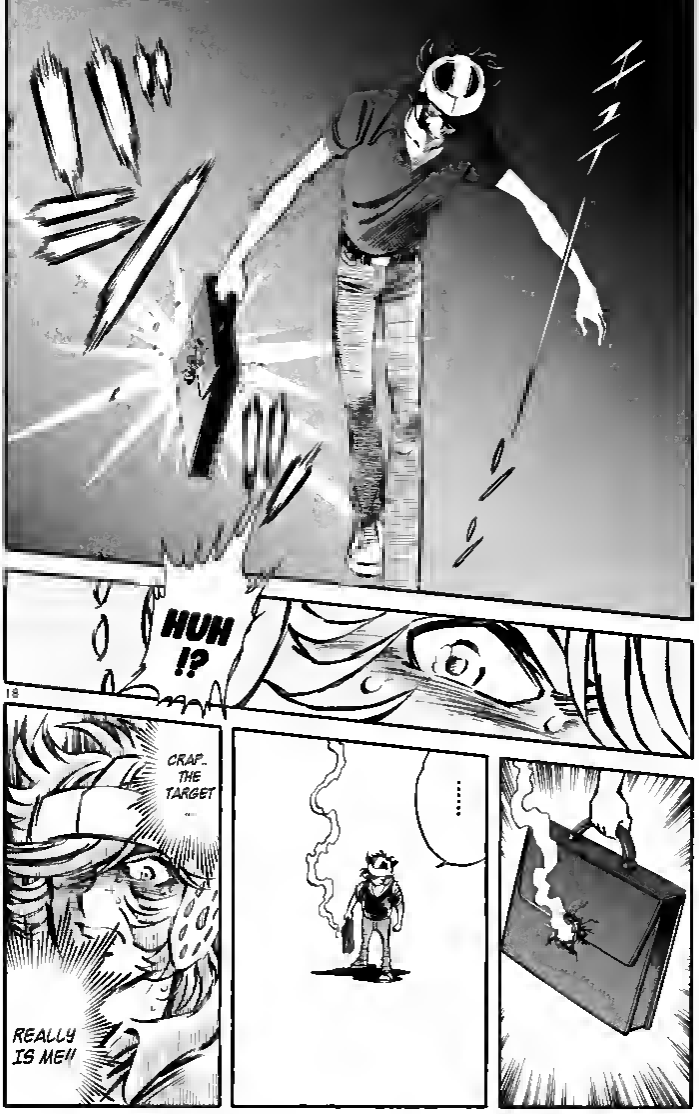

THERE'S MORE THAN ENOUGH REASON TO TARGET A MEDIA EXECUTIVE.
IN FACT, IT'S MORE PROBABLE THAT MY EDITOR'S THE TARGET!!
NO REASON AT ALL!!
I MEAN, THERE'S NO REASON I WOULD BE THE TARGET!
...AS FAR AS I KNOW.
BUT THERE'S NO REASON TO TARGET ME!!
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

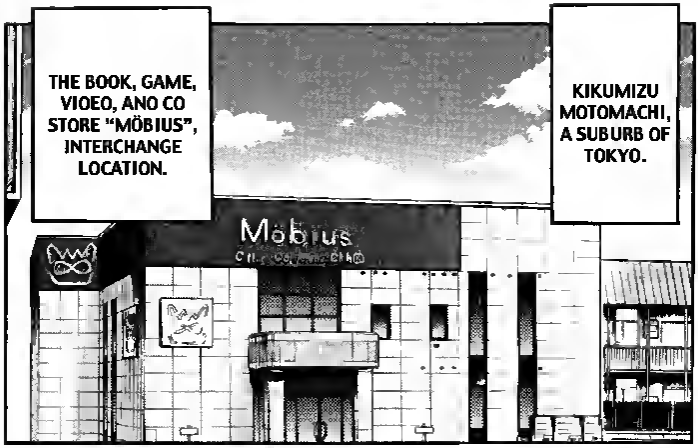

AL-RIGHT...
OR I COULD GET CAUGHT IN THE CROSS-FIRE!!
I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE AS SOON AS I CAN...
AT ANY RATE,

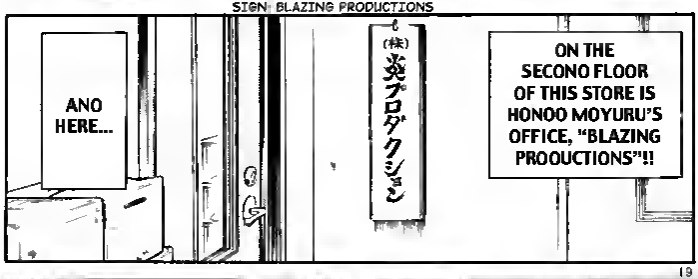
17

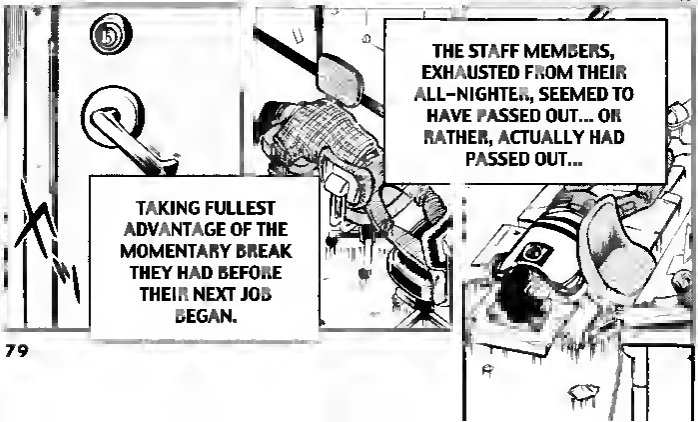

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
I SHOULD BE SAFE NOW...
HUFF

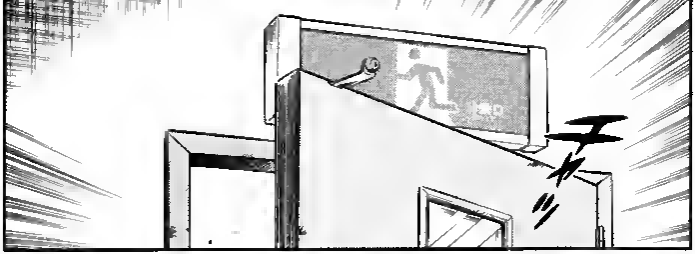

AHHH


ﾌｪｲﾄ
HUH !?
18
CRAP.. THE TARGET ...
REALLY IS ME!!
.....


THE BOOK, GAME, VIOEO, ANO CO STORE "MÖBIUS", INTERCHANGE LOCATION.
KIKUMIZU MOTOMACHI, A SUBURB OF TOKYO.
Möbius
SIGN: BLAZING PRODUCTIONS


ANO HERE...
(株)炎プロダクション
ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THIS STORE IS HONOO MOYURU'S OFFICE, "BLAZING PROOUCTIONS"!!

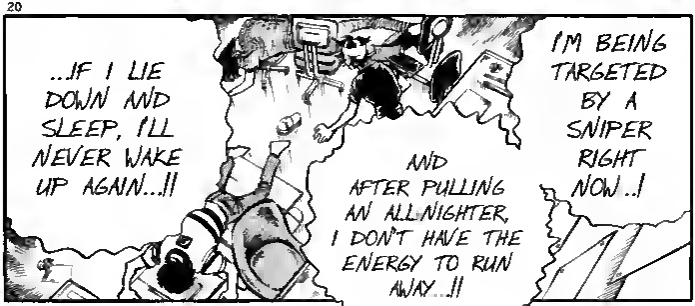

THE STAFF MEMBERS, EXHAUSTED FROM THEIR ALL-NIGHTER, SEEMED TO HAVE PASSED OUT... OR RATHER, ACTUALLY HAD PASSED OUT...
TAKING FULLEST ADVANTAGE OF THE MOMENTARY BREAK THEY HAD BEFORE THEIR NEXT JOB BEGAN.



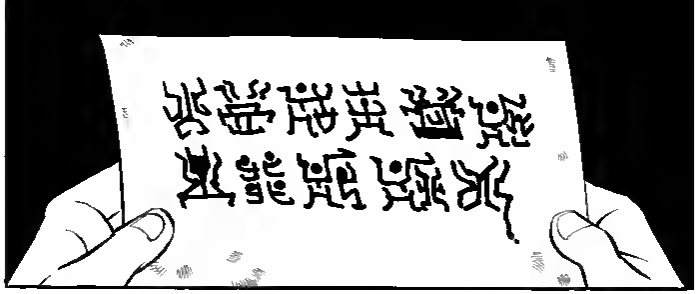
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

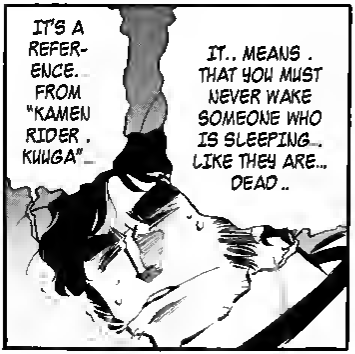
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE... WAKE UP...!!
G-
GUYS...

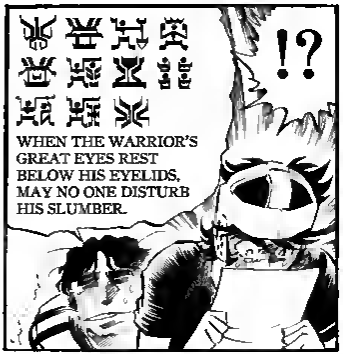
20

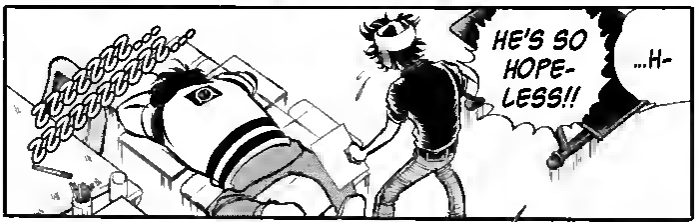

...IF I LIE DOWN AND SLEEP, I'LL NEVER WAKE UP AGAIN...!!
AND AFTER PULLING AN ALL-NIGHTER, I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO RUN AWAY...!!
I'M BEING TARGETED BY A SNIPER RIGHT NOW..!

WAKE UP, DAITETSU!!
COME ON, WAKE UP! MY LIFE'S IN DANGER, YOU KNOW!!
LISTEN TO ME!
UNN GH..
NOW LISTEN TO ME!!
GOOD, YOU'RE AWAKE!
MMGH...
21
WHAT THE...!?
WH...

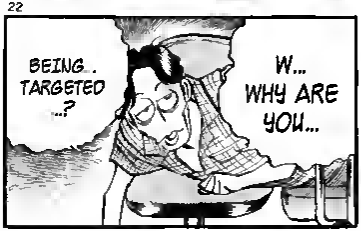


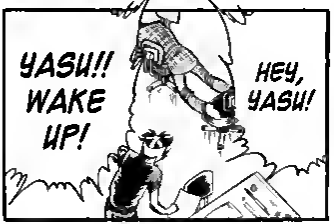

IT'S A REFERENCE. FROM "KAMEN RIDER. KUUGA"...
IT.. MEANS. THAT YOU MUST NEVER WAKE SOMEONE WHO IS SLEEPING.. LIKE THEY ARE... DEAD..


!?
WHEN THE WARRIOR'S GREAT EYES REST BELOW HIS EYELIDS, MAY NO ONE DISTURB HIS SLUMBER.

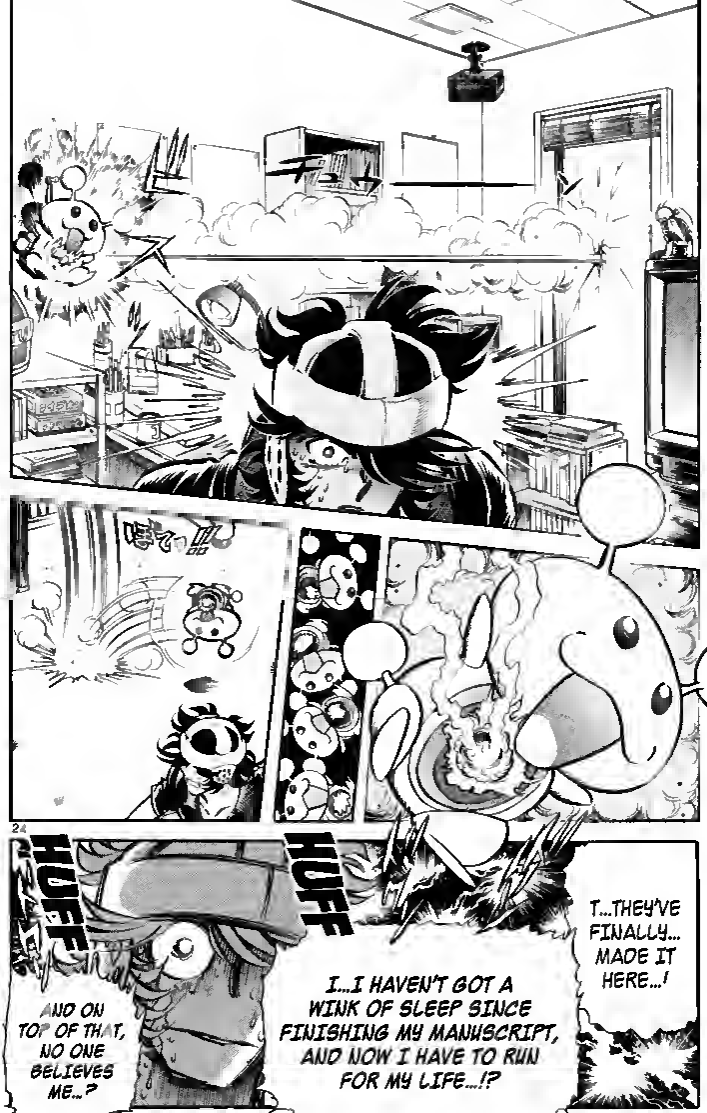

HE'S SO HOPELESS!!
...H-

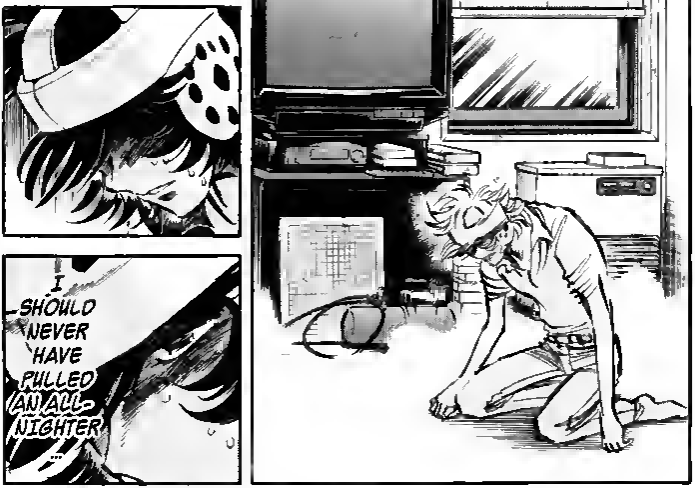
22

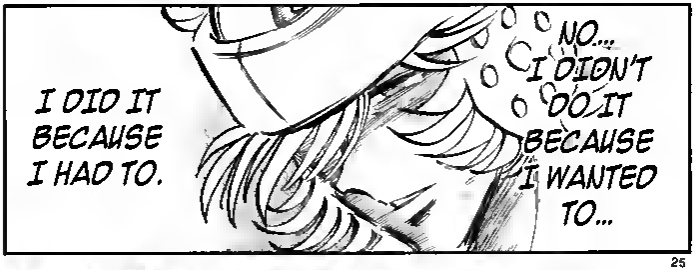

BEING. TARGETED ...?
W... WHY ARE YOU...


YASU!! WAKE UP!
HEY, YASU!

AND...
SOME OVERSEAS ORGANIZATION WITH A VENDETTA AGAINST "PIKARIMON" HIRED A SNIPER TO ELIMINATE ITS ORIGINAL CREATOR!!
AND ASSUMED THAT I'M THE ORIGINAL CREATOR OF "PIKARIMON"!
THAT SNIPER MUST'VE MADE A MISTAKE...
AHHHH!
ZZZZZZ...
23


24
HUFF
HUFF
T...THEY'VE FINALLY... MADE IT HERE...!
I...I HAVEN'T GOT A WINK OF SLEEP SINCE FINISHING MY MANUSCRIPT, AND NOW I HAVE TO RUN FOR MY LIFE...!?
AND ON TOP OF THAT, NO ONE BELIEVES ME...?


I SHOULD NEVER HAVE PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER...


I DID IT BECAUSE I HAD TO.
NO... I DIDN'T DO IT BECAUSE I WANTED TO...

25

I HAVE TO FINISH AN ENTIRE STORY-BOARD BY NOON!!
THE CALENDAR PROVES IT!!

I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO BE DEALING WITH SNIPERS!!
THAT MEANS THAT I HAVE TO GET WHATEVER SLEEP I CAN TO RECOVER, RIGHT NOW!!
BUT IF I CAN'T SLEEP WHILE I'VE GOT A TARGET ON MY BACK...!!
26
I HAVE TO FACE THE ROAD THAT LIES AHEAD OF ME!!!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP MOVING!!

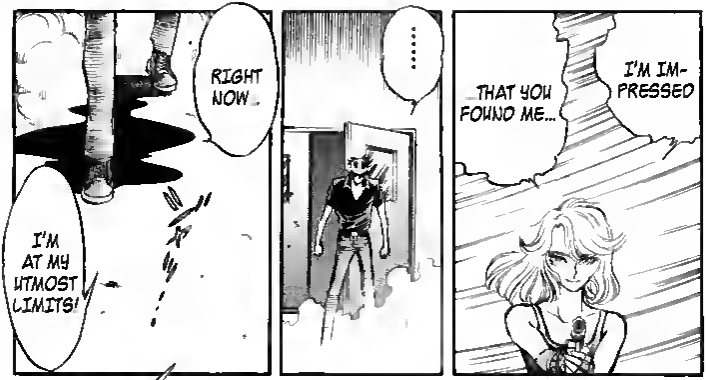
I'LL SHOW YOU THAT I'M NOT...
THE ORIGINAL CREATOR OF "PIKARIMON"!!

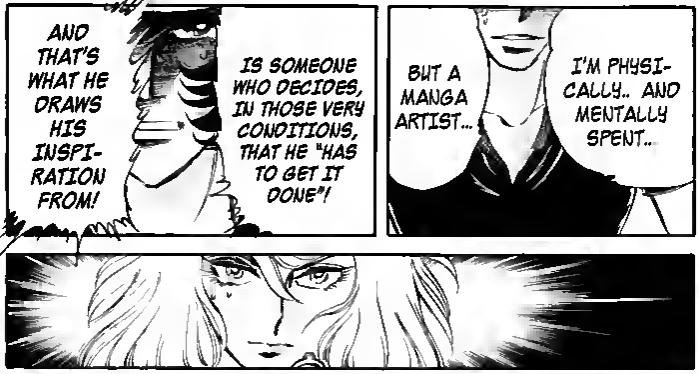
ARRRRRRRGGGGH!!!
HE'S HEADING STRAIGHT FOR ME...!
THE TARGET CAME RUNNING OUT!?
WHAT!?

YOU DAMN DIRTY SNIPER!!
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR BULLETS...
AHH!!
DON'T TELL ME.. HE DODGED THEM!?
W.. WHY CAN'T I HIT HIM?
NO... IT CAN'T BE! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!!

I'LL BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF!!
YOU IDIOT!
HERE IT COMES!

チーン
チューン
チューン
HOW IS HE DODG-ING THE BULLETS !?
NNGH ...!?

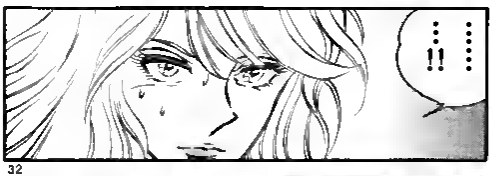

RIGHT NOW...
I'M AT MY UTMOST LIMITS!
.....
...THAT YOU FOUND ME...
I'M IMPRESSED


AND THAT'S WHAT HE DRAWS HIS INSPIRATION FROM!
IS SOMEONE WHO DECIDES, IN THOSE VERY CONDITIONS, THAT HE "HAS TO GET IT DONE"!
BUT A MANGA ARTIST...
I'M PHYSICALLY.. AND MENTALLY SPENT..

HIS SENSES ARE SHARPENED BEYOND ALL REASON... AND HE CAN FEEL THINGS HE COULD NEVER FEEL BEFORE!!
IT'S THESE TIMES THAT HE GETS GOOD IDEAS... IDEAS HE WOULD HAVE NEVER EVEN IMAGINED!!

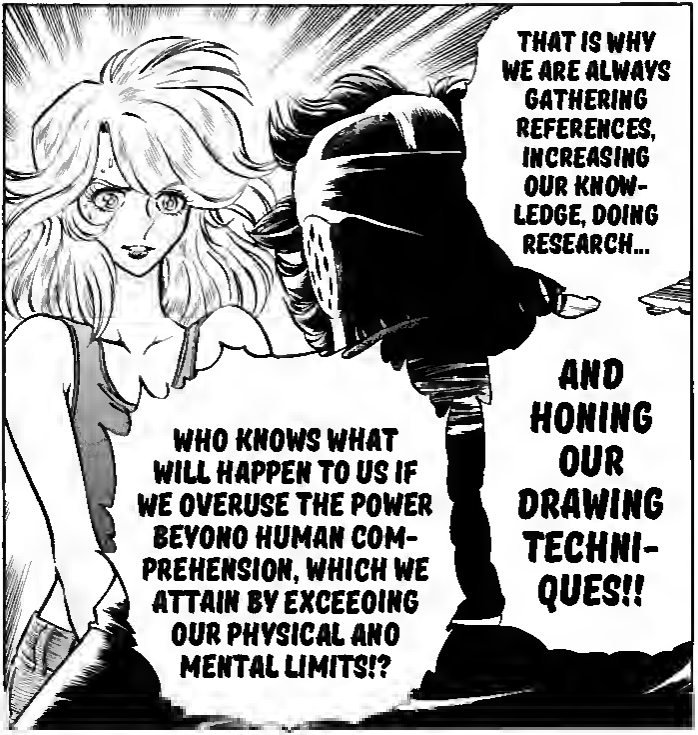
YOU'RE ONLY CAPABLE OF SHALLOW THOUGHTS !!
YOU THINK YOU CAN SOLVE ANYTHING BY ELIMINATING A VISIBLE BEING...
YOU CAN ONLY LOOK AT THINGS FROM A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE..
YOU WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND.

S...
SIXTH SENSE !?

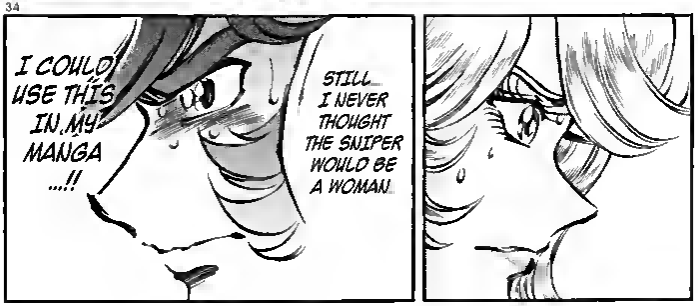

.....!!

.....

BUT NOT EVEN WE CAN KEEP WORKING IN THIS HEIGHTENED STATE...
WE WOULD RATHER NOT ENTER THIS STATE AT ALL!!
33
!!

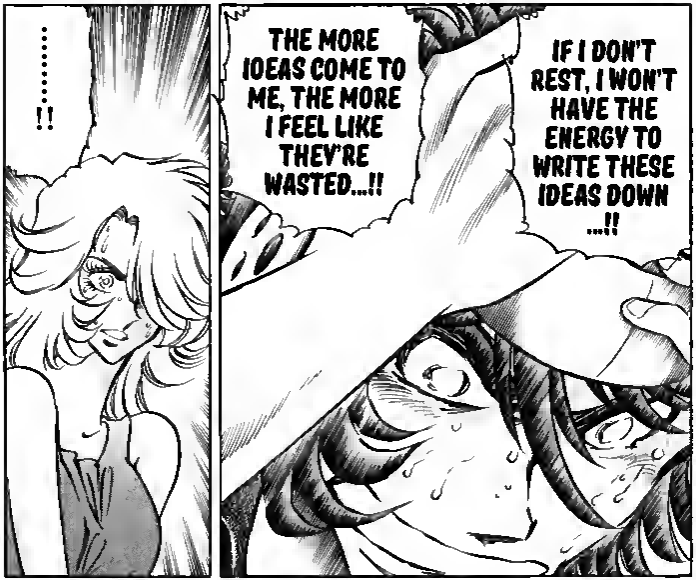

THAT IS WHY WE ARE ALWAYS GATHERING REFERENCES, INCREASING OUR KNOWLEDGE, DOING RESEARCH...
AND HONING OUR DRAWING TECHNIQUES!!
WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US IF WE OVERUSE THE POWER BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION, WHICH WE ATTAIN BY EXCEEDING OUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL LIMITS!?

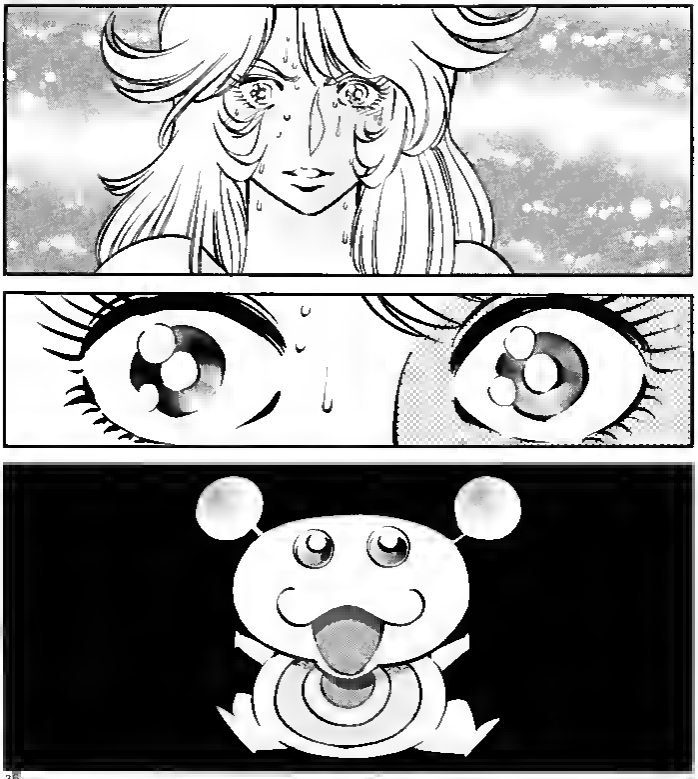
34

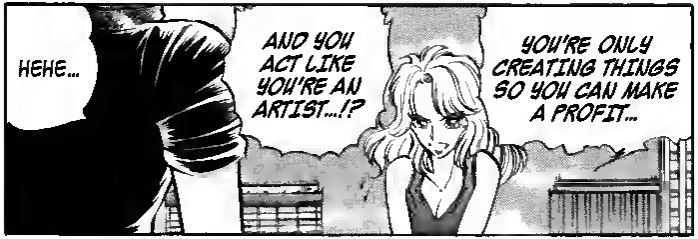

I COULD USE THIS IN MY MANGA ....!!
STILL... I NEVER THOUGHT THE SNIPER WOULD BE A WOMAN.

STOP IT! WHAT GOOD WILL THESE IDEAS DO ME NOW!?
AHHH...!! YOU SEE? I JUST GOT ANOTHER IDEA!

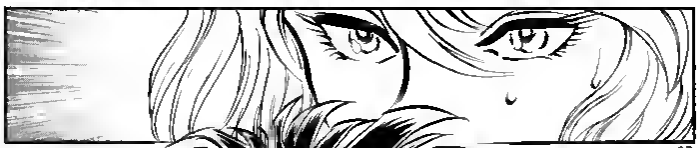
35


.....!!
THE MORE IDEAS COME TO ME, THE MORE I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE WASTED...!!
IF I DON'T REST, I WON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO WRITE THESE IDEAS DOWN ...!!

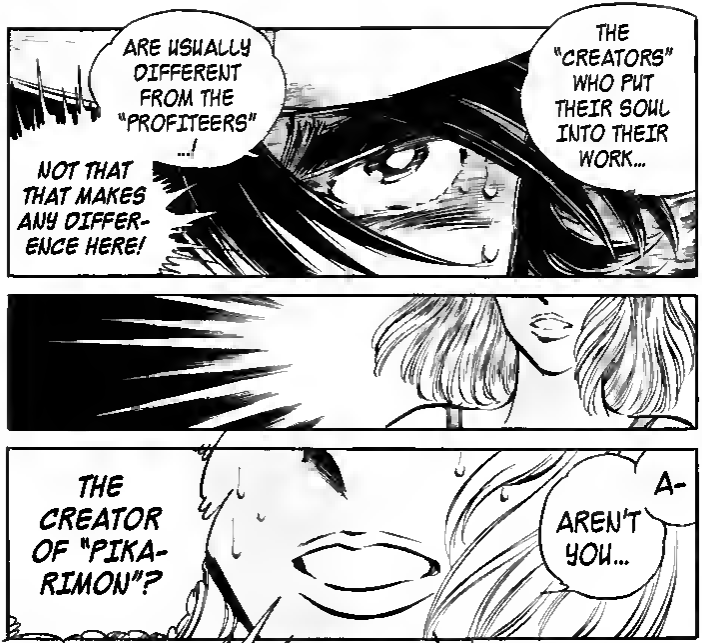

36
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME!!
H... HMPF!
...HUH !?


HEHE...
AND YOU ACT LIKE YOU'RE AN ARTIST...!?
YOU'RE ONLY CREATING THINGS SO YOU CAN MAKE A PROFIT...

I'M SURE YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD UNDERSTAND!
IT'D BE A LOT EASIER IF ALL OF MY WORKS HIT THEIR TARGET LIKE I WANT THEM TO.



NOT IN THIS WORLD ...
BESIDES, THE "CREATORS" NEVER MAKE MUCH OF A PROFIT...

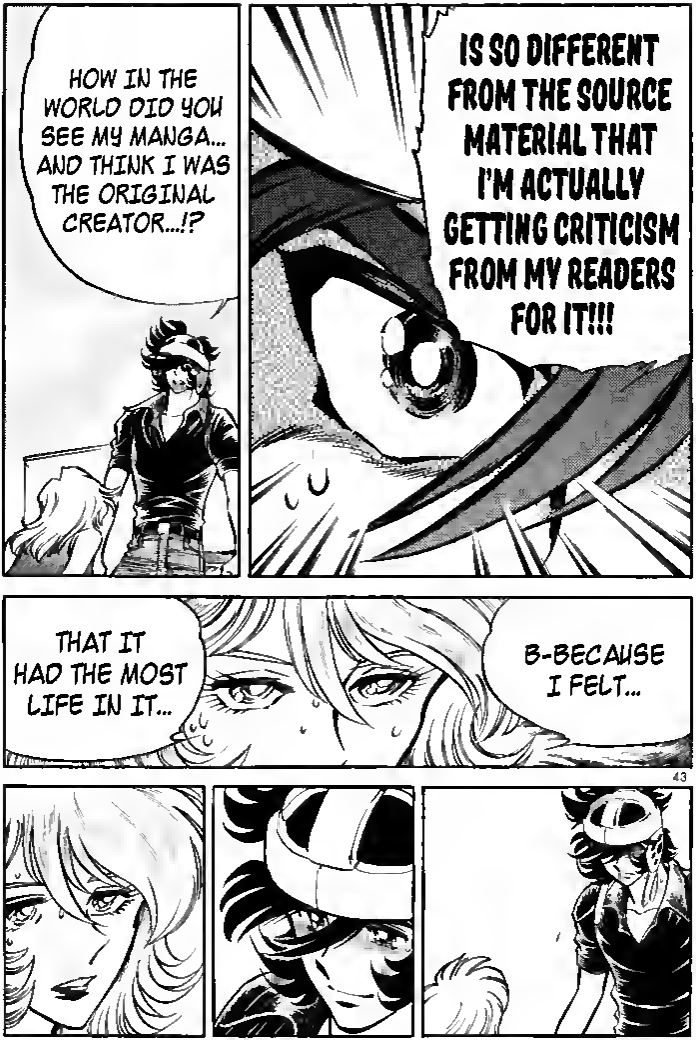

THE "CREATORS" WHO PUT THEIR SOUL INTO THEIR WORK...
ARE USUALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE "PROFITEERS"...!
NOT THAT THAT MAKES ANY DIFFERENCE HERE!
A-
AREN'T YOU...
THE CREATOR OF "PIKARIMON"?

AREN'T YOU THE MAN...
THAT ALL OF THE GLOBAL PROFIT MARGINS OF "PIKARIMON" GO TO!?

AT
ALL
!!
NOT

I DON'T SEE A SINGLE RED CENT!!!
NO MATTER HOW MANY MILLIONS OF COPIES OF THE GAME AND ANIME ARE SOLD WORLDWIDE...

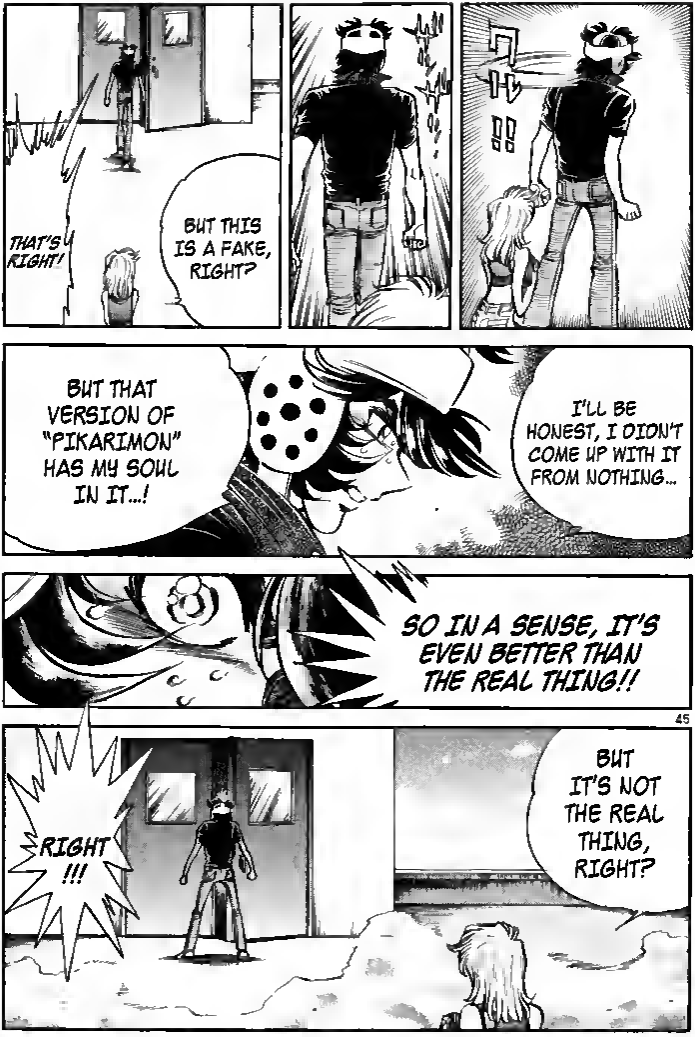
I'D LOVE TO BE IN THAT POSITION, WHERE ALL THE MONEY COMES TO ME!
WELL..
TO BE HONEST WITH YOU...
YOU'VE GOT THE "PIKARIMON" COMICS I WROTE,
...SO WHY DON'T YOU COMPARE IT TO THIS "REAL" CARD...?
...URK ...!!
42
MY COMIC...
...THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU'RE RIGHT... THEY'RE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!!
THEY'RE DIFFERENT!

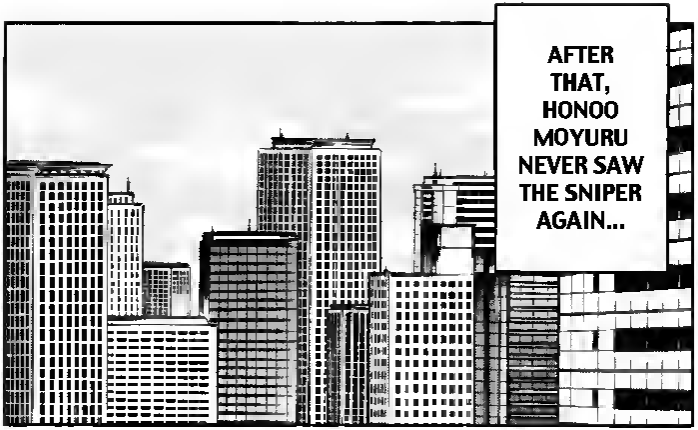

HOW IN THE WORLD DID YOU SEE MY MANGA... AND THINK I WAS THE ORIGINAL CREATOR...!?
IS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE SOURCE MATERIAL THAT I'M ACTUALLY GETTING CRITICISM FROM MY READERS FOR IT!!!
THAT IT HAD THE MOST LIFE IN IT...
B-BECAUSE I FELT...
43

...I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THAT!
THANK YOU!!

STGN POROPORO COMICS
44

.....
.....


THAT'S RIGHT!
BUT THIS IS A FAKE, RIGHT?
!!
BUT THAT VERSION OF "PIKARIMON" HAS MY SOUL IN IT...!
I'LL BE HONEST, I DIDN'T COME UP WITH IT FROM NOTHING...
SO IN A SENSE, IT'S EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING!!
45
RIGHT !!!
BUT IT'S NOT THE REAL THING, RIGHT?


AFTER THAT, HONOO MOYURU NEVER SAW THE SNIPER AGAIN...

SO...

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SHE MIGHT'VE SHIFTED HER SIGHTS
TO THE ANIME COMPANY OR GAME COMPANY OR SOMETHING
WHO KNOWS...?
WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT SNIPER ENDED UP?

I DON'T KNOW...
BUT I'M POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ELSE...
.....

AL-THOUGH,

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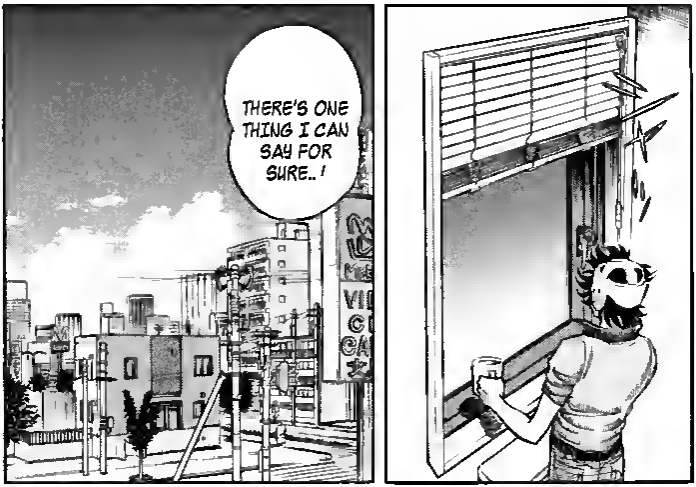
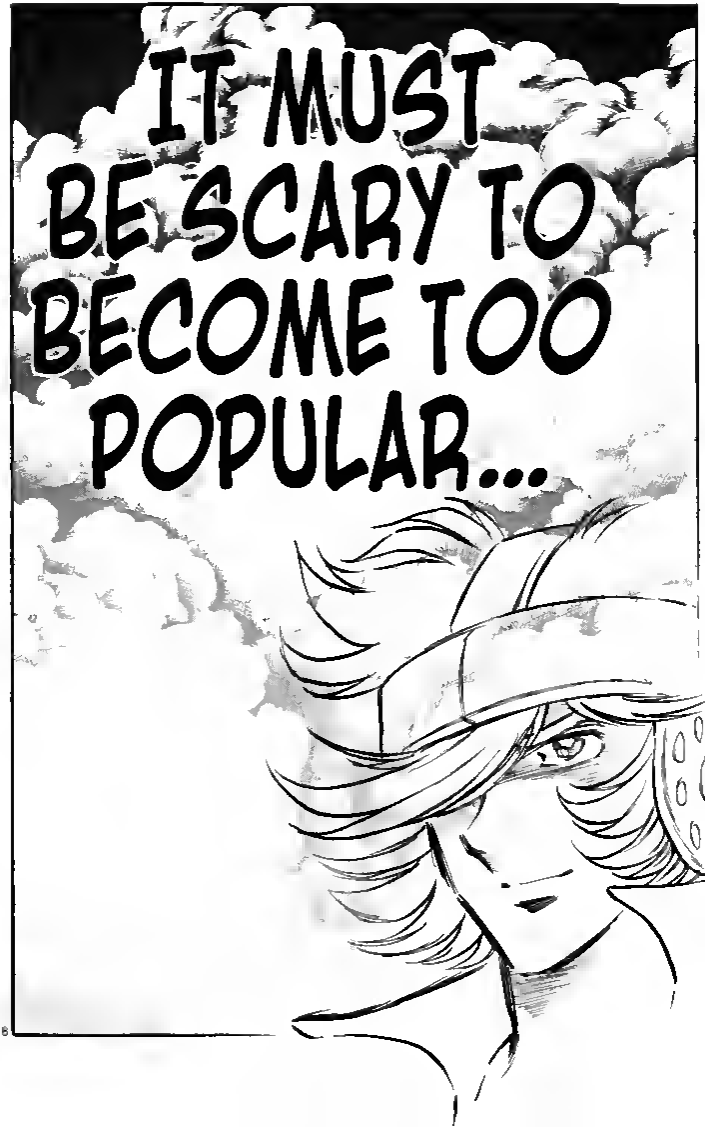
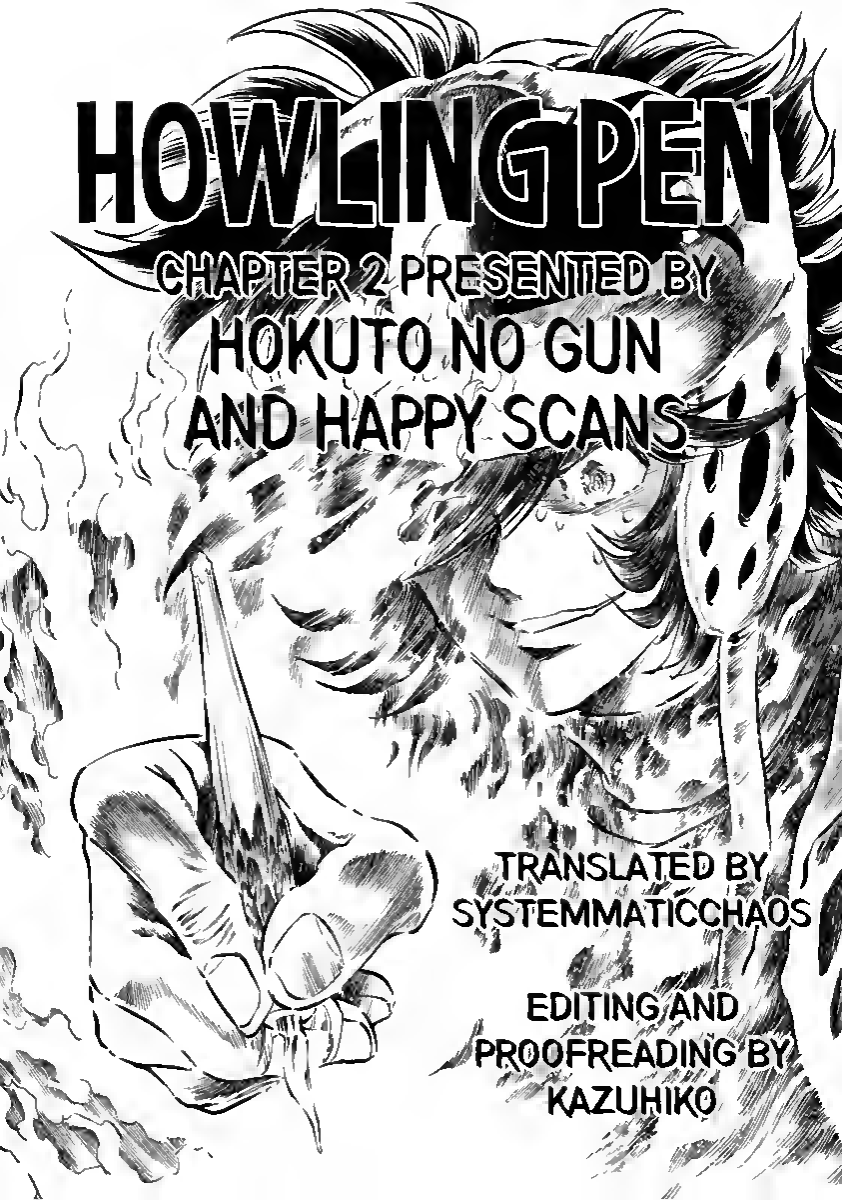

THERE'S ONE THING I CAN SAY FOR SURE..!


IT MUST BE SCARY TO BECOME TOO POPULAR...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AND HAPPY SCANS
TRANSLATED BY
SYSTEMMATICCHAOS
EDITING AND
PROOFREADING BY
KAZUHIKO